

layout for living

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the battle of legs and wheels

Lewis Mumford, in *The New Yorker* for November 15, 1947, wrote: "If there is one axiom in urban planning that no modern scheme should ignore, it is that there should be a separation of legs and wheels, of walkers and drivers."

There have been countless reports and suggestions on how to resolve this ugly and painful competition for the use of urban channels of movement. We attempt in these columns only to assemble in word and image some of the evidence. It seems to us that the issue has long been going by default to the few with their Trojan Horsepower. But the battle continues, the daily casualty lists lengthen, and gradually it is coming to light that to every collision there are two sides, at least . . . People interested in planning will look at the various points of view, before they leap to the support of every proposal for traffic improvement.

Perhaps your reporter should first of all make clear that he is not a motorist (in the sense of being a car-owner), but that he has been a car-driver in urban streets for twenty years, and a bicycle-rider in them for rather longer. He has thus tasted the triumphs of both the wheeled and the legged.

The battle is joined wherever pedestrians or motorists find their advance blocked by detachments of the opposing force. The foot-slogging army in Canada numbers over ten millions, while the motorized corps is perhaps one-sixth that strength. What the latter lacks in numbers, it makes up in concentration, speed and superior armour. However, at their most concentrated (as in Toronto and surrounding York County) the motor vehicles are outnumbered five to one by pedestrians; and allowing the usual $1\frac{3}{4}$ persons per car, even the Torontonians motor-riding public is still outnumbered at least two-to-one by the non-motor-riding public. There are rather more families without cars than families with cars in greater Toronto; and a recent report to the Toronto and Suburban Planning Board shows that less than one-third of the workers in the area who have to ride to work habitually ride in automobiles.

One would suppose that the humbler majority would be well looked after in planning schemes; yet most of the traffic proposals we have seen come close to disregarding the existence of the pedestrian army—or else recognize them as something of a nuisance. The Wilson report on Toronto, just mentioned, says at the very outset: "Sidewalk facilities are an inherent part of the transportation service, but except at a few localities, present no acute problem at the present time and are not referred to in the report." (This promise on page 2 is faithfully kept for the remaining 141 pages.) Of course if as a pedestrian you are to keep to the sidewalk, you're doomed to spend the rest of your life on one city block. Most of the battle takes place *off* the sidewalks—but by no means the whole battle.

continued on page two

Take a Running Start

The public highway is a very ancient institution; our common law ideas of it—and even some of the present rights of way in which those ideas grew up—date back many centuries. Only in the past century has injury inflicted by some users upon others become a serious matter. An American columnist attributes this to the brutal sense of superiority apparently felt by many operators of vehicles; he sees a new set of castes or orders of knighthood, based on the horsepower at one's command. Certainly there is a widespread attitude of drivers towards the less fortunate masses which can only be described as 'cavalier'.

A reminder of the truer legal rights came a few years ago from a high British Court. In awarding damages for injury inflicted by a motorist on a pedestrian, the Court said that the operator of the car, in introducing his perilous machine into the public way had assumed the responsibility for the element of danger so created,



and that 'the whole onus of caution was upon him'. Approving the judgment, the *Manchester Guardian* commented that to hold otherwise would be as if to allow that a machine gun club might practise in the High Street, provided the public was rigidly excluded.

The pedestrian army may have suffered its first serious defeat in allowing streets to be built with a continuous carriage-way, and sidewalks only around the buildings. As well as we can discover, that happened in totalitarian fifteenth century Florence, so it's a little late to shed tears now; but there are older Canadian towns where the concrete walks still cross the roadway at every intersection, and the practice might be revived. We are not bound to accept a Florentine street design; other arrangements are possible.

Only in the past eighty years have vehicles of any kind taken on the main burden of transporting the passer-by; for nearly fifty of those eighty years the vehicles were almost all street-cars, whose operators built their own tracks, and whose safety records have been very good. About thirty years ago began the wide use of private vehicles; we don't yet appreciate all the consequences. First of all, they required hard pavements—which the Wilson report on Toronto* tells us account for much of the increase in the cost of maintaining tracks. Second, the private vehicles occupy vastly more space per passenger than public vehicles, and

require parking space—so streets were no sooner paved than they had to be straightened and widened. In this country, millions of additional dollars had to be spent annually to clear the roadways of snow. Then the great increase in the number of people at the controls of vehicles called for elaborate systems of traffic regulation and signalling. Not least, the carelessness of private vehicle operators meant public paraphernalia and personnel had to be procured to chase improper drivers on unlawful errands over long distances and at high speeds.

Oddly enough, most of the municipal cost of all this paving, widening, traffic-lighting, road-clearing, organization of Safety Councils, policing and radio-chasing was charged against individuals, not on the basis that they owned private vehicles, but rather on the basis that they owned land and buildings. Even now, it is proposed that the cost of making way for private vehicles to run and stop (by building subways for the public ones) should be paid for mostly by auto-less passengers and by property-owners.

Peace Proposals

With the battle of legs and wheels growing daily more serious, it is understandable that pious proposals for settlement are coming forward. The most promising among them follow Mumford's general principle of the separation of the adversaries. In new residential areas the attempt has been made to separate the footways and roadways by the house-lots themselves, as at Radburn N.J. and Wildwood near Winnipeg (see LAYOUT FOR LIVING No. 17). In older residential and downtown areas, where the street pattern is already fixed, the suggestion is usually to create a few main 'freeways' where automobiles shall have absolute priority.

Preventions and Priorities

Less frequently, it is suggested as only fair that between these expensive elevated urban highways the humble pedestrian might be given a break. This year it was earnestly proposed that New York's Fifth Avenue, from 34th Street to 59th Street, should be made a shoppers' pedestrian island—with all vehicular traffic blocked off at cross streets (*Architectural Forum*, May 1948). The most explicit advocates of the pedestrian's case are British writers, such as Sir Alker Tripp, the traffic expert of Scotland Yard. They usually refer to the areas between major arteries as 'precincts'—and in *The Architectural Review* there have appeared brilliant suggestions for the protection of pedestrian circulation in precinctual roads and lanes in general, and for those around Westminster and Saint Paul's in particular. (These proposals provided for the exclusion of vehicles from the frontage of the *Review's* own office.) The general case was well put by Gordon Cullen in the August 1948 *Review*, and is quoted on page 4.

*Wilson, Norman D.

A transportation plan for metropolitan Toronto and the suburban area adjacent; prepared for Toronto and Suburban Planning Board, Toronto, 1948. (The effects of transit methods on city development; Toronto's transportation needs; existing authorities and the organization of a system; zones and fares; design and financing of rapid transit and arterial roads. 143 pages, graphs and plans. Mimeo.)

Caution: Go Slow

These suggestions indicate how easily and inexpensively the precincts between the arterial roads can be rendered safer for the (all too) mortal abroad on foot—once his rights are re-affirmed. When we come to the major arteries, however, there are other problems. They were evident in the discussions on traffic at our Montreal Conference last year, and again at the recent Ontario Regional Conference of CPAC.

A minority of those heading into the central areas use private vehicles, and those vehicles use the streets far less efficiently than do public carriers. How shall the fair cost of their driving folly be charged against those who indulge in it? Once they pay for wide straight freeways and tall parking buildings, will they not have to admit new motorists who did not pay? What will then happen to the value of the public transit systems? What will happen to real estate values in central areas? If central real estate values rise in a city after the first freeway is built, will the motorists be willing to pay the added price for land to build a second—when it is obvious that their own effort created that value? If the motorists who created the values are unwilling to pay for them twice, why should property-owners in other parts of town be more willing? Is there an equitable way to assess the cost of road improvements for private vehicles, only against the users of those roads and the property-owners whose values are increased by those roads? Last but not least, if more and more drivers are going to be attracted by wider roads and better parking to spend their working lives on less and less of the city's land, how far can the centralizing go?

On the soil of most Canadian cities, there is a limit to the feasible height of buildings. In office and shopping areas, we are already approaching the point where as much ground or floor space is needed for workers' cars as is needed for the work itself. There is thus for a given working and trading population a more or less calculable area required to move the cars in, park them, and accommodate their occupants at work. Taller offices, narrower streets or less parking space must only mean that some will travel to work by more efficient vehicles, or will move their work-places away.

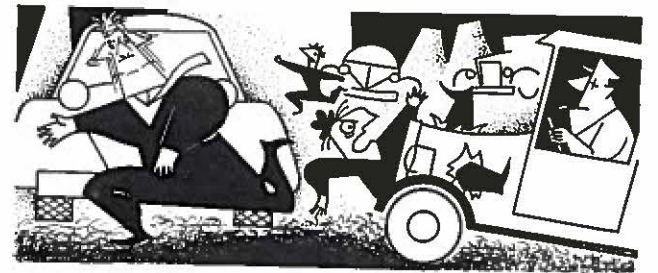
This process of decentralization has been going on in larger cities for almost two decades; even while about 60,000 workers are being invited to occupy new office space at King and Bay Streets in Toronto, the rate of office vacancies has been increasing in some adjoining blocks. It might be said: "Well, that's just too bad for the owners of older buildings!" Unfortunately, it is also too bad for the owners of Toronto's street system, utilities, transit facilities, police and fire protection, and tax base—in short for the people of Toronto as a whole. Building without thought of access—or provision of access without thought of the consequent temptation to new building—is bound to bring about shifts and stresses wasteful to the whole fabric of the community.

Aside from determining who within a metropolitan area should pay for these luxuries, there arises the question: how extensive an area benefits from the traffic improvements made in the heart of the city?

Nearly all traffic studies recognize that the problem can no longer be dealt with by purely municipal authority, but rather that regional jurisdiction is called for. This again is clearly shown in Mr. Norman Wilson's Transportation Plan for Metropolitan Toronto; it envisions a Metropolitan Arterial Roads Commission, and a metropolitan motor vehicle licence fee, observing that:

- (a) 30% of the metropolitan population lives outside the municipality;
- (b) Over 30% of the cars in the Province, and over 25% of the population of the Province are located in the metropolitan area, and habitually use the city streets.

But recognizing the problem as a regional one, the walking army has another interest to defend against the artery-builders: namely, reasonable pedestrian access to the open countryside. We see proposals already being acted upon to fill Toronto's few remaining ravines with carbon monoxide and noise; we see the river-banks and park strips around the nation's capital expropriated for public use and then all too often clad with asphalt and defended against the majority by the racing machines of the few. We share the concern of Charles Madge the Mass-Observer, who has this to say about some of the planning proposals by the West Midland Group for the 'Conurbation' around Birmingham: "It is only in matters of detail that any doubt creeps in. One such doubt is as to the use of 'green wedges' between the urban nuclei. These should surely not be thought of primarily as settings for parkway motor roads? Should not the elusive green belts and wedges, green strips and settings, within the Conurbation be considered as territory for walking over rather than driving through?"



One Way

In sum, we think the battle of legs and wheels can be ended only by comprehensive public planning of land use—for dwellings, for work-places, for recreation and for free and safe movement of various kinds among these places. Such planning must be undertaken as a single continuing operation. To supersede the mad battle of legs and wheels the most orderly Court of Claims will be the community's Planning Office. Such a Planning Court should quickly dismiss the traffic rules, devices and budgets that look only in one direction, and get conclusions upside-down—as if their authors wrote with one eye shut, and standing on their heads...

Is anyone driving our way?

— A. H. A.



legs and wheels

by Gordon Cullen*

The street scene is bounded by sky, walls and road. The sky, ever changing, the walls, old and crumbling or sharp and new; variety of style and contour, texture, colour and character. The floor—a monotone—a monotone of tarmac.

Headed by the fire engine and ambulance the motor car has penetrated every crack and crevice of our cities, lanes, yards and courts. All the richness and variety of the floor has been submerged in the traffic flood and inhabitants of buildings venture out at their peril, making their way by means of islands, refuges, safety zones and beacons.

When we consider that in the normal urban block streets occupy about one-third of the total area we get some idea of the loss which this mechanized age is sustaining. Instead of walls and floor being in harmony, the floor linking or separating architectural elements and expressing the kind of space which exists between buildings, it is as though the buildings were models plunked down on a blackboard. In the battle of legs and wheels, the front line is the high road with its pedestrian crossings...

There are many materials which can be used to revitalize the town's floor, to reinforce the highway code and, by indicating different uses, in time to establish conventions of behaviour... (The floor) can be light or dark, rough or smooth, plain or intricate. The possibilities of design are immense. Yet to-day they are all sacrificed to the technical necessities of the contact between the floor and a rubber tire.

Traffic inside a building is mainly pedestrian, collisions are rare and fatalities even rarer. In the forecourt or drive, in the open air, things are

*Extracts from *The Architectural Review* (London) of August 1948, with the kind permission of the editors. Photos except where noted are by Capital Press Service, Ottawa; drawings are by the Graphics Division, National Film Board of Canada.

still sane and reasonable. The odd car realizes its intrusion and makes way for the pedestrian. But as the pedestrian's world dwindles to thin ribbons of pavement on either side of the traffic stream—let him beware. The warm, comforting security of indoors passes too quickly to the exposure of the hunted.

Thus we have two results arising from the universal flooding of our towns by the motor car: (a) the suppression of variety and character in the ground surface; (b) the invasion of the pedestrian reserves.

Point (a) however is by no means implicit in the existence of motor traffic, since if the business of organizing road traffic efficiently were studied a solution might be found in the use of road surfaces to indicate the road's use for a particular purpose. A coloured pencil is more easily chosen out of its box if the outside of the pencil is coloured to match the lead instead of the colour being named. In the same way a universal convention of colours and patterns indicating such things as one-way streets, parking, pedestrian crossings and so on would allow the road to be read at a glance. This would, as a result, introduce a new functional aesthetic into the urban view.



That mortal who would cross beside the National War Memorial in Ottawa must await his fresh green light—or else sprint. The same is true in Toronto's University Avenue, Winnipeg's Portage Avenue, Vancouver's Kingsway. Some pedestrians naturally decline either to wait or to sprint. Some motorists, even some constables and aldermen, seem to think traffic lights are blessings for which walkers should be thankful. Of course those on foot if left alone need no signals: it is the entry of even a few 'perilous machines' that necessitates regulation. Sound traffic planning should call upon the authors of danger to pay the price of protection—and impose the minimum of inconvenience on the inherently harmless majority.

First of all, a system of priorities to stem and direct the flood of traffic. Secondly, a set of road conventions to enforce this, such conventions being integral with the road itself and of such a nature as to enhance the surrounding buildings...

For example, there are occasions when absolute pedestrian priority is desirable. This may occur in the case of cathedral precincts, and such special cases as schools, squares and old people's houses. Nevertheless, entrance for fire engines



Beneath the national temple of Justice, enough people to fill a good-sized town risk their lives in daily crossing. Islands hardly give them standing room. Before and behind race the elite—more often than not in violation of clearly marked speed limits, and honking priority as if of right. The motor vehicle seems here to stay, and the national capital planners should disentangle the routes of legs and wheels. The Ontario Royal (Chevrie) Commission of 1938 was "convinced that the... fairest method of dealing with additional public expenditures necessary to permit the motor vehicle to function satisfactorily is to assess them against the motor vehicle".

and ambulances is essential, and this precludes the use of any physical barrier... A suitable convention (might be) a stretch of cobbles across the access road through which a flagged walk provides pedestrian access—since cobbles are difficult to walk on... Inside this protecting band the designer is free to employ any material in any pattern... For car-drivers cobbles would mean NO ENTRY.

No one denies the place of swiftly moving traffic in the life of a town. It is the universal spread of traffic, its arrogant seizure of all roads, that calls for protest. It is very human to want to drive right up to one's front door, but in admitting this we also admit the possibility of admitting any traffic. In this way a street which may have a dozen cars belonging to it is, as often as not, busy all day with traffic which uses it as a short cut or an easy way round a major crossroads. (Instead, we could designate) the street or square in which traffic is limited to that having business in the area. There are two points to notice here: (a) The scarcity of traffic will have the effect of enhancing the domestic character

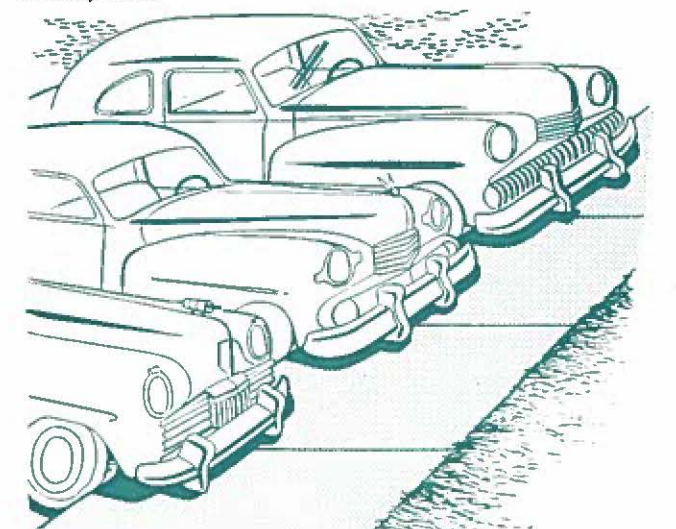


Stockholm is a city of about 600,000 in a latitude close to Churchill's. Automobiles are fairly cheap and common, though bicycles are commoner. The 'Slussen' shows that they know the worth of traffic separation. Besides motor roads, cycle tracks and walkways (some at roof level) this area has terminals for: the national railroad, suburban subway, surface trams, busses, ferries. Nearby are sheds for railway and barge freight, restaurants, shopping centre and club premises. Scores of thousands of people move in good order through the Slussen daily. (American Swedish News Exchange Photo)

of the whole square; * (b) Those motorists who do enter it, being on their own ground, will observe the nicety of good manners and regard for others which is so difficult to observe when one is on "foreign" territory, i.e., when we do not fear recognition and do as we please.

* Thomas Sharp enlarges on this point in his report *Oxford Replanned*: "... Though human crowds can hardly be too thick and busy about our towns for buildings to be seen properly, their machines can... Oxford's street architecture can nowadays be seen only above a plinth of gleaming internal-combustion machines standing bonnet to bumper... To provide proper car-standing facilities is one of the jobs of a town plan. What we must not do is to requisition the open areas rightfully provided by earlier generations for public enjoyment and divert them to serve as garages..." Surveys have been made of the quantitative reduction in the amount of open space in which travellers on foot are still safe. These forgotten men are apparently being herded into tiny strips of concrete—they are left but a fraction of their former freedom.

Even during lulls in the battle the pedestrians seem to lose ground on many fronts.



international federation for housing and town planning: xixth congress

Mr. Edouard Fiset has provided an informal impression of the XIXth Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning which was held from June 20th to 26th of this year in Zurich, Switzerland. He reports that there was an overall attendance of nearly four hundred delegates representing thirty-one different countries (if Scotland is so counted). He reports that the majority of the delegates were architects and in view of the number of simultaneous events he must await the official report to get the overall view—much as the ringside spectator waits for the news-reel to see what really happened.

For the major topics of the Congress there were papers prepared in advance and only summarized in the actual sessions. Extra time for discussion was secured in this way. The general sessions on Planning dealt with the acquisition of ownership rights and the problems of planning on a regional or national scale. The general sessions on Housing dealt with technical progress in construction and with aid to families of low income. Our reporter attended the last-named session and says that there was general agreement that subsidization without vigorous attempts to rationalize old-fashioned building methods could not solve the problem. The application of modern industrial techniques to building was considered too formidable a task for the building trades in some smaller countries and therefore a proper field for international effort. A continuing committee was appointed to pursue the task.

Smaller study groups on planning dealt with the training of planners, the analysis of planning surveys and the methods of administering publicly the use and development of land. Other study groups covered housing accommodation standards and equipment, the siting of dwellings, the architecture of the neighbourhood, housing management and housing in tropical climates.

Our informant took a special interest in the discussions on training planners, in view of the total absence of centres for such training in Canada. He says that two broad views emerged. Some thought that planning called for its own extended course of training covering social research, public law and administration, and an introduction to the physical science of building; others held that better planning could be done by groups drawn from a number of existing professions and practised in collaborative work.

The second view tended to prevail—perhaps because of the preponderance of architects at the Congress. Those holding other views should perhaps seek fuller representation at future Congresses. The spokesmen for the latter claimed that present architectural training could not be broad enough in scope to cover all the complexities of community planning. On the other hand, there was general agreement that once the appropriate social and physical data have been analyzed by the proper experts, the plastic design to meet the needs indicated would be an almost purely architectural function.

The discussion on neighbourhood units led to the conclusion that the theoretical formulae (such as we published last May) are apt to be too rigid, when it comes to designing on land that is difficult for highways

and drains, and for people with such idiosyncrasies as duplicate school systems.

Our correspondent notes the appointment of Mr. P. Alan Deacon of the CPAC Council to the International Federation's Council. He says that the Congress was handsomely organized, the Swiss people unfailingly courteous, and their recent architecture and neighbourhood planning of exceptional interest. He sees the need for fuller representation from Canada at future Congresses, and for closer co-ordination of the work of inter-governmental and non-governmental planning bodies at the international level.

publications noted

Colvin, Brenda

Land and landscape. London, John Murray, 1948. (With 17 line drawings and over 100 photographs. The thesis: "We have reached a stage where the control and conscious design of the landscape has become definitely a human responsibility. No longer can it be left to the hazards and chances of events . . . Refusal to accept responsibility means only the extension of an environment which will in time react badly on humanity.")

Dickinson, Robert E.

City region and regionalism; a geographical contribution to human ecology. London, Kegan Paul, 1947. ("It is important to undertake a closer study of the actual human space relations in the city, town and countryside . . . These space relations lie at the root of a thorough understanding of the structure of an urbanized society, whose characteristics are based fundamentally on the fact of mobility.")

Hayes, Wayland J.

The small community looks ahead. (Prepared with the collaboration of Anthony Nethoy.) New York, Harcourt Brace, 1947. ("This book is concerned with the nature of communities—how they came to be as they are and how they change. It may perhaps help those who serve communities to acquire the insight which will enable them to see the parts and functions of society in relation to each other. As such, it may be a useful introduction to community development and planning."—Introduction. By a small community is meant one that can be understood by most of its adult citizens without their having to refer to maps, documents and expert interpretation.)

Ric-wil Company

Housing America. Cleveland, the Company, 1948. (By manufacturers of underground conduit and piping; opens up the neglected question of reduction of shelter cost by means of economies in the layout of services external to the dwelling itself. Illustrated with layouts for central heating and other utilities for large American housing projects.)

National Recreation Association

Standards for neighborhood recreation areas and facilities. New York, the Association (315 Fourth Ave.) 1943. (Sixteen lucid pages for 15 cents; outlines the kinds of outdoor and indoor space needed, the amounts in terms of the population served by them, the agencies who bear responsibility for their creation and maintenance, and the sort of inter-agency co-operation that has been found to produce results.)

International Labour Office

Public investment and full employment. Montreal, the Office, 1946. (This study of nearly 350 pages reviews the role of governments in promoting full employment by the management of their expenditures on capital account. Of special interest to CPAC are: the legal administrative, technical and financial requirements to be met for effective planning—if physical developments are to take place with an eye to their effect upon the national employment level.)

canadian planning items

Institute of Professional Town Planners

Monthly Review. Toronto, the Institute (24 Bloor Street East), from 1948.

Municipal Review of Canada

(Monthly; published at Lachute, P. Q. See especially October 1948 issue, containing several articles and comments on planning.)

Municipal Service Bureau

The borough system of government for greater Montreal. Montreal, the Bureau (132 St. James St.), 1947.

Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities

Report of the Special Committee on Dominion-Provincial-Municipal relations. Montreal, the Federation, 1948. (Mimeographed; contains a useful summary of the flow of conditional grants-in-aid between governments in Canada, as well as the opinions of municipal officers as to the needed changes of responsibilities and revenue-sources.)

Colter, E. Royden

Taxation and assessment practices (an address presented to the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities in June 1948). Montreal, the Federation, 1948. (Those who want better cities should know how they will probably be paid for; in this 18 page mimeographed text, the Executive Director of Saint John gives an insight into the causes of the mounting crisis in Canadian local government and in the financing of new local outlay.)

Engineering Institute of Canada

Engineering Journal Vol. 31, Nos. 9 and 10. (September and October 1948) (Issues on the supply and use of water resources in the Prairies, on conservation and on community planning standards.)

Deacon, Faludi and Layng

County of York Planning Survey; a report by the consultants associated for the survey and submitted to the Toronto & York Planning Board. Toronto, 1948 (Mimeo.) (Deals with the condition and development of the North Area of the County, i.e. outside the metropolitan area.)

Stratford, Ontario

The official plan of the City of Stratford. Stratford, the Corporation, 1948. (Plan prepared by E. G. Faludi and approved pursuant to the Ontario Planning and Development Act.)

Windsor (Ontario) Planning Area Board

Annual report 1947. (One of the best presented reports to come our way from any Canadian city.)

low rental housing begun in toronto

On the 29th September the cornerstone was laid in the initial building, the north part of the Regent Park housing project in Toronto. This project is of particular interest to CPAC because funds have been contributed to it by the ratepayers of Toronto, and by the governments of Ontario and the nation. It is doubly of interest because the contents of the cornerstone were presented in the ceremony by Mrs. H. L. Luffman of our national Council; and those contents included a report prepared while he was still in Toronto by Mr. Humphrey Carver of our national Council.

The ceremony was attended by members of the Toronto Branch of CPAC. It will be recalled that this Branch was formerly the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association of Toronto and that—as a group and as individuals—its members did much to expedite this first large low-rental project. Regent Park is ultimately planned to include twenty-nine buildings and to accommodate 1,056 families. No demolition of existing dwellings will take place until their inhabitants can be accommodated in the new quarters.

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